

MANUAL ALPHABETS

AND

THEIR HISTORY,

WITH

SKETCHES, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND VARIETIES.

Price, Ten Cents.

PUBLISHED BY
WILLIAM B. SWETT,
MARBLEHEAD, MASS.

1875.

NEW ENGLAND GALLAUDET ASSOCIATION OF DEAF MUTES

Is an organization whose present aim is to purchase a farm in New England, where land is cheap, and convert it into an INDUSTRIAL HOME, where worthy but unemployed mutes can find a place to work and earn their board, at least. In this way much practical good can be done at small cost.

A recent bequest of \$500 has furnished a basis for operations, which it is desired to increase, and for which end contributions are solicited, of any size, to enable the Association to carry out its plans.

Donations received by the Agents of this book will be faithfully applied and acknowledged.

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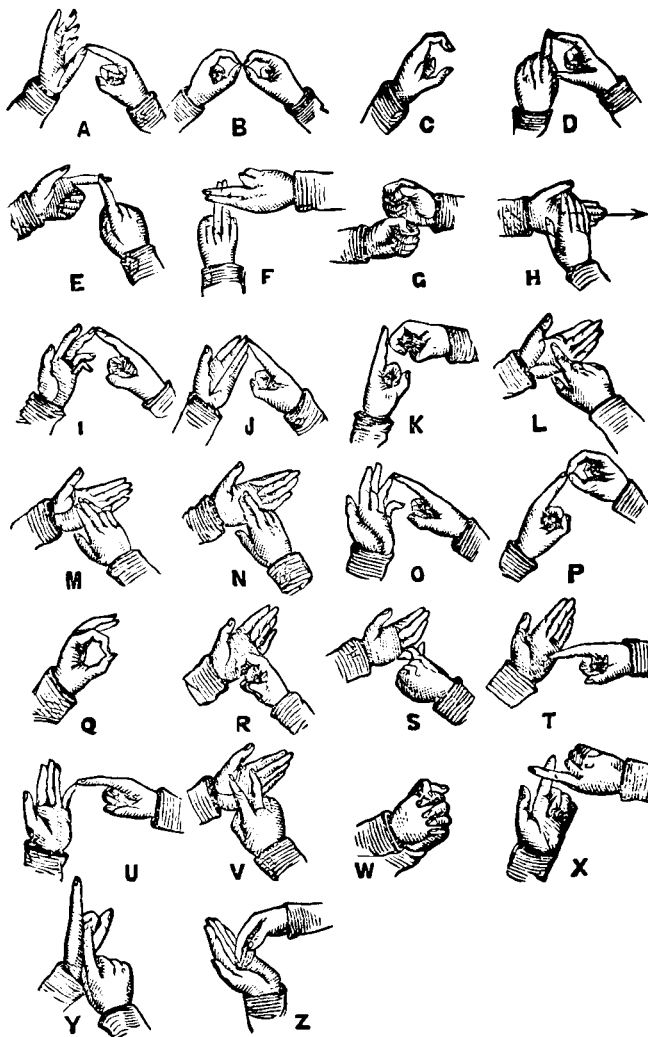
INTRODUCTION.

THIS little book is issued by **WM. B. SWETT**, a deaf-mute, who has also published “**The Adventures of a Deaf-Mute,**” a series of sketches of more than ordinary interest, relating to life in the White Mountains.

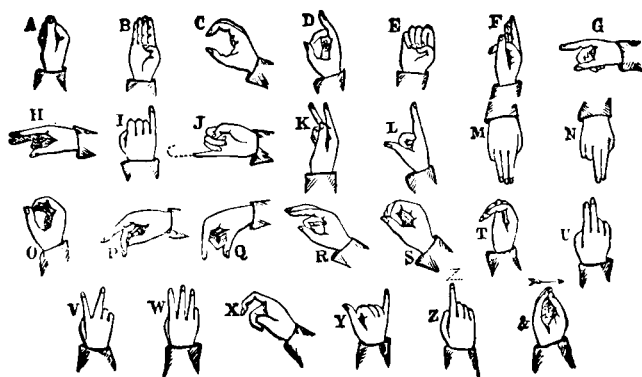
From the sales of both these books **Mr. Swett** hopes, while interesting and instructing the purchasers, to derive sufficient profit to support his family, he being now disabled from any work, with poor bodily health, and a disease of the eyes which has destroyed one and threatens the other.

All purchasers of this book will understand that they are aiding a deaf-mute, who, while able, actively devoted his energies to the welfare of his fellows in misfortune, and deserves some return therefor in his now darkened days.

DOUBLE HAND ALPHABET.



MANUAL ALPHABETS.



THE SINGLE-HANDED ALPHABET.

FROM an acquaintance with the manual alphabets which are contained in this book (the double-handed alphabet will be found on the opposite page) much amusement and instruction may be derived. Their use, by hearing and speaking children, directs attention to the written form of words and greatly aids them in forming the habit of spelling correctly, which is of so much importance to them in after life.

Deaf-mutes, for whose benefit these alphabets were at first invented, frequently misplace words, and construct their written sentences in a very ungrammatical manner, — their knowledge of the English language (confessedly one of the hardest to learn) being more or less limited by their misfortune and other circumstances, — but they sel-

dom *misspell* a word. This fact alone is ample proof that the use of the manual alphabet, by which, in the main, instruction is imparted to them, is a great help to correct spelling.

The use of the manual alphabet requires that each word used should be spelled out; and it will readily be seen that practising it is, in reality, practising spelling, and that those using it must necessarily become proportionately correct in that important branch of education. It is capable of many uses, and will be found, when acquired, as is easily done by any person of ordinary intelligence, to be one of the most convenient things, at certain times and in many places, that exist.

In this connection, a brief history of manual alphabets may not come amiss. We quote from a late writer on the subject:—

“The manual alphabet is by no means a modern invention. There were manual alphabets used in very early times, as early at least as the time of Solon, the Grecian law-giver, who flourished about 500 B. C.

“Dr. Peet, of New York, supposes that when Solomon speaks of those persons who ‘speak with the feet and teach with the fingers’ (Proverbs vi, 13), he alludes to some mode of furtive communication on forbidden subjects, resembling the early manual alphabets, used by children in schools to exchange words without being detected by the master.

“The earliest alphabets we know of were founded on the ancient signs for numbers. The Greeks and Romans, at a very early day, had a regular and ingenious system of notation by means of positions of the hands and fingers.

“Pliny speaks of an ancient statue of Janus, at Rome, the hands of which were sculptured in the positions representing the number 355, which was the number of days in the lunar year of Numa.

“The Greeks and other Eastern nations used all the letters of their alphabet for the notation of numbers.

Hence, as every letter denoted some number, — A for 1, B for 2, etc., — it was very easy to reverse this, and make each sign for a number denote a letter.

“The Romans had an alphabet, used for communications which those making them did not wish to be known to the by-standers, in which each letter was denoted by touching some part of the face or body, the name of which began with that letter, *e. g.* — *aurem* (ear), *barba* (beard), *caput* (head), *dentes* (teeth), etc. These alphabets seem to have been generally known, at least to the learned and curious, from very early times, and it is remarkable that, so far as we know, no one ever thought of using them for the instruction of the deaf and dumb till the time of Ponce and Bonet, the early Spanish teachers, the former of whom died in 1584.

“The manual alphabet which is now used in French and American schools (the one-handed) was brought from Spain to France, and from thence it reached America through Dr. Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc, portraits and sketches of whom will be found elsewhere.

“The two-handed alphabet has been used in England for centuries, but the one-handed alphabet, owing to its obvious advantages, is gradually making its way there, although the former has the advantage of being very generally known in society.

“Of the two alphabets, the one-handed is certainly the most graceful and convenient. In a multitude of cases, we may have one hand engaged, and of course it will be hardly possible to spell intelligibly, if at all, with both hands, for instance, in riding, or holding an umbrella, or in reading from a book or letter in one hand.

“Yet the two-handed alphabet has some advantages. Its characters, bearing more obvious resemblance to the forms of letters, are more easily learned, and they are visible at a greater distance and with less light. Experience seems to prove, also, that it is less fatiguing to the muscles.

“Either alphabet can be used in the dark, after a little practice. In the dark, the sense of feeling comes into play, as the one who is spoken to must *feel* of the speaker’s hand or hands, thereby discerning, by the position of the fingers, what letters are made.

“In point of rapidity, actual trial and numerous experiments have failed to place the advantage, definitely, on either side; but the impression is that the two-handed alphabet, presenting, as it were, letters in larger type, can be *read* faster than the other by one equally practised with both.

“A deaf-mute of nimble fingers and quick perception will spell out the Lord’s Prayer by either alphabet in about half a minute, omitting no letter. Some can do it in less, but not so as to be legible to average eyes. This is from three to four times as fast as an expert penman can write the same prayer so as to be legible, though probably three or four times as slow as it can be read orally, by one expert in oral reading.

“Neither alphabet will, except in very rare cases, where flexibility of finger and quickness of visual perception are extraordinary, enable a practised speller to communicate a speech, prayer, sermon, etc., *word for word*, to another, although the *substance* can readily be given: and the attention of many interested minds has long been directed to the discovery of some substitute by which this can be done. Several plans have been proposed, but none seem as yet to meet the case, — some because they are too complicated, and others from their evident inconvenience; but, in this age of progress and invention, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that a substitute will hereafter be devised which shall meet all reasonable requirements.”

The true way to educate children is to combine instruction and amusement or interest. The manual alphabet is just such a combination.

VARIETIES OF LANGUAGE.

SPEECH, doubtless, was the first form of language; reading and writing came long afterwards. Deaf-mutes, in all nations, were long regarded as inaccessible to language: that idea was long since exploded. "Necessity is the mother of Invention," and the modes of expression are now almost as various as the thoughts to be expressed. There is written language, spoken language, the language of signs, and many others.

To understand fully the importance or value of anything it is only necessary to be without it for a time. Blessings almost invariably "brighten as they take their flight." The value of language would be unspeakably enhanced in our minds by a temporarily enforced silence, — a prohibition of all expression of thought. There could be no books, no newspapers, no telegrams, no conversation. The world would be a vast cemetery; the universe would stand still: for language is its life, and to stop language is to stop all progress, of whatever name or nature. There are forms of language which can be addressed to each of the five senses, — sight, hearing, feeling, taste, and smell. *Audible* language is that which can be heard, as the human voice, the lowing of cattle, the bark of a dog, etc. *Visible* language is that addressed to the eye, as writing, print, signs, expressions, motions, etc. Under this head come all the works of Creation. *Tangible* language appeals to the sense of touch, as the conversation of deaf-mutes in

the dark, by feeling the letters of the manual alphabet on each other's hands. Those who are blind, in addition to being deaf and dumb, are very expert in this mode of communication. Laura Bridgman is a prominent example of this. In connection with this subject, Dr. Thomas H. Gallaudet once asked the following question to an assembled company: Suppose two perfectly dark rooms, with a thick partition between them, having a very small hole in it, and an intelligent deaf-mute in each room: could the two deaf-mutes converse with each other? The conclusion of the company was that, as they could neither hear, see, nor feel, conversation was impossible; but Mr. Gallaudet demonstrated that a conversation might be carried on by means of an alphabet of *odors* or *smells*, which might be conveyed through the hole on bits of *spells* fastened to small sticks, as, A (ammonia), B (bergamot), C (cinnamon), etc. There was no pretence of making a practical use of the idea, the intention being simply to show that it might be done. So with an alphabet of *taste*, as, A (apple), B (butter), C (cheese), etc., by which a conversation might be carried on for amusement or experiment. The great and universal law of compensation is well illustrated in all this. There is also an alphabet of *expressions of the face*, — A (admiration), B (boldness), C (curiosity), etc.

The subject is inexhaustible; but the above instances will show how varied are the methods of communication possible, and their practice will serve to while away many a dull evening, furnishing amusement and instruction for young and old.

THE practice of the manual alphabet will greatly advance the education of children, whether hearing or deaf mute.

EVEN for those who hear, it is very convenient, for there are times when they wish to converse *silently*.



THOMAS HOPKINS GALLAUDET.

THIS good man, whom every deaf-mute regards as a benefactor in no small degree, and whose name and memory are cherished by that unfortunate class all over the country, was born in Philadelphia, Pa., Dec. 10, 1787. His family early removed to Hartford, Conn., which city was ever after the residence of the son.

His attention was early called to the existence of a neglected and unfortunate class of people called deaf and dumb; his warmest sympathies were enlisted in their behalf, and he sailed for Europe in 1815 to qualify himself as a teacher of the deaf and dumb.

He made the acquaintance of the Abbé Sicard — one of the greatest benefactors of deaf-mutes — in London, and went to Paris with him and obtained a knowledge of the system there employed. Returning to America, he brought with him Laurent Clerc, a highly educated deaf-mute, of whom more is said elsewhere, and established the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb at Hartford. He was its principal until 1830, and then resigned, but always evinced a lively interest in its welfare to his death.

In 1850 the deaf-mutes of the country united in presenting Dr. Gallaudet and Mr. Clerc with a magnificent service of silver plate as a testimonial of appreciation ; and in September of the ensuing year multitudes of the unfortunate, besides the deaf and dumb, were pained beyond expression to hear that their loved benefactor had passed away from earth.

In 1854 the deaf-mutes of the United States erected a handsome marble shaft to his memory, on the lawn in front of the American Asylum ; but his most enduring monument is in the hearts of those whom he benefited during his life.

Dr. Gallaudet was, during the latter years of his life, intimately connected with the care of the insane, and his labors in that sphere were both enthusiastic and effective. The following lines, written for his funeral service, most clearly exemplify the character of the man: —

He dies : the earth becomes more dark
When such as he ascend to heaven,
For where Death strikes a shining mark
Through bleeding hearts his shaft is driven.
Alike the sounds of mourning come
From humble hut and lofty hall, —
Wherever misery finds a home ;
And all lament the friend of all.

He dies ; and still around his grave
The silent sons of sorrow bend,
With tears for him they could not save, —
Their guide, their father, and their friend ;
And minds in ruin ask for him,
With wondering woe that he is gone ;
And cheeks are pale and eyes are dim
Among the outcast and forlorn.

He lives, — for virtue cannot die :
The man departs, his deeds remain ;
They wipe the tear, they check the sigh,
They hush the sob of mortal pain.

Love lasts forever ; age on age
The holy flame renews its glow,
While man's brief years of pilgrimage
End in the dust of death below.

SUCCESS in life is very apt to make us forget the time when we "was n't much." It is just so with a frog on the jump: he can't remember when he was a tad-pole, but other folks can.

THE number of deaf-mutes in our population is increasing, and an acquaintance with the manual alphabet will enable others to converse with them without the trouble of writing.

"It is an entertainment and a novelty to children to find that they can produce language in a new form."

GOOD DEFINITIONS. — Jean Massieu, a French deaf-mute, contemporary with Laurent Clerc, and, like the latter, a teacher in the Paris Institution, once gave the following definitions: —

Sense is an idea-carrier: hearing is the auricular sight; gratitude is the memory of the heart; hope is the blossom of happiness; and eternity is a day without yesterday or to-morrow.

PUNCTUATION. — This great and important auxiliary to correct writing is much ignored and little understood. One needs a *system* to go by. Perhaps the following rules, by an "ancient printer," may be of assistance to some. They are admirable for simplicity, to say the least: —

"I set up (type) as long as I can hold my breath, then put in a comma; when I gape, I insert a semi-colon; when I sneeze, I put in a colon; and when I want to take another chew of tobacco, I insert a period."



LAURENT CLERC.

THIS compeer and associate of Dr. Thomas H. Gallaudet, to whom the latter owed much of his success in exciting an interest in the public mind in the education of the deaf and dumb, was born in La Balme, Canton of Cremieu, Department of Isere, France, December 26, 1785. At the age of twelve he entered the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Paris, then under the charge of the Abbé Sicard, and ultimately came to be one of the best teachers there. Dr. Gallaudet, being unable to remain in France so long as was desirable to obtain a thorough knowledge of the sign-language, selected Mr. Clerc to accompany him to America on his return, and finally induced him to do so.

Leaving home, country, and friends for the sake of the yet uneducated thousands of deaf and dumb in a strange land, Mr. Clerc devoted himself to their instruction for more than forty years, until age and infirmities forced him to relinquish his post, when he was granted a pension for the remainder of his days, by the Directors of the Institution whose cradle he had rocked and to whose growth he had so largely contributed. Ten years after

his retirement from active service, on the morning of July 18, 1869, in the eighty-fourth year of his age, Mr. Clerc followed his companion, Gallaudet, to the other world. Like the latter, he was missed and mourned, and the memory of the two is inseparable in the deaf-mute mind.

In 1874 a monument, consisting of a shaft and pedestal, surmounted by a bronze bust of Mr. Clerc, was erected opposite that commemorative of Dr. Gallaudet in front of the American Asylum at Hartford, on which occasion, as on the previous one, large numbers of mutes assembled from all parts of the country to do honor to his memory.

To the labors of Gallaudet and Clerc we know of no more expressive tribute than the following lines by Dr. Abraham Coles, of New Jersey :—

“Not less their praise nor less their high reward,
Th’ unequalled heroes of a task more hard,
Enthusiasts, who labored to bridge o’er
The gulf of silence, never passed before,
To reach the *solitaire*, who lived apart,
Cut off from commerce with the human heart,
To whom had been, all goings on below,
A ceremonious and unmeaning show;
Men met in council on occasions proud,
Nought but a mouthing and grimacing crowd;
And all the great transactions of the time,
An idle scene or puzzling pantomime.
Children of silence! deaf to every sound
That trembles in the atmosphere around,
Now far more happy, dancing ripples break
Upon the marge of that once stagnant lake,
Aye by fresh breezes over-swept, and stirred
With the vibrations of new thoughts conferred.
No more your minds are heathenish and dumb,
Now that the word of truth and grace has come.”

.

A TRUE man never frets about his place in the world, but just slides into it by the gravitation of his nature, and swings there as easily as a star.

INSTITUTIONS FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB.

IN New England there are the following institutions, the principals of which can be addressed by those interested in deaf-mute children of whom they may know, who stand in need of education, for full particulars:—

DAY SCHOOL FOR DEAF-MUTES, No. 11 Pemberton Square, Boston, Mass.

CLARKE INSTITUTION FOR DEAF-MUTES, Northampton, Mass.

AMERICAN ASYLUM FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB, Hartford, Conn.

In New York City there are two; in Buffalo, N. Y., one; and one in Rome, N. Y.

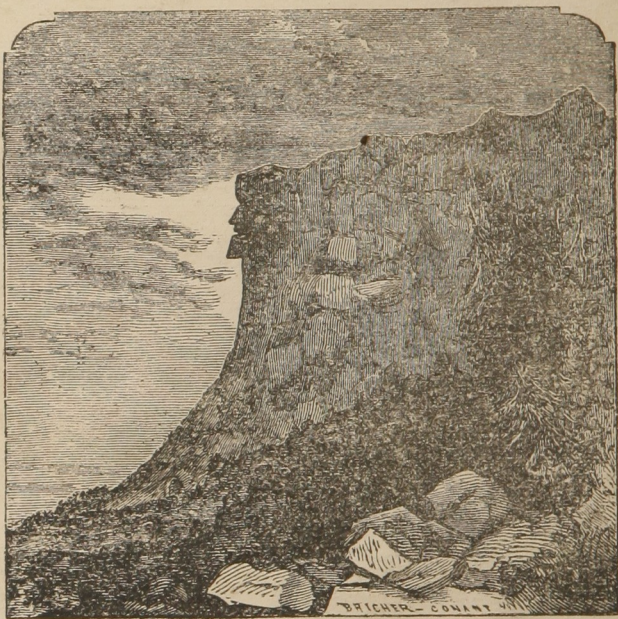
Other States have nearly all one each, and there is a “National College for Deaf-Mutes” at Washington, D. C.

All these institutions are the progeny, properly speaking, of the American Asylum at Hartford, and the system pursued in them, with two or three exceptions, is mainly that originally brought over by Messrs. Gallaudet and Clerc, subject to such improvements as experience has suggested.

The number of deaf-mutes in the United States is estimated at between 15,000 and 20,000.

ADVENTURES OF A DEAF MUTE
AT THE
WHITE MOUNTAINS:

AN ENTERTAINING ACCOUNT OF WONDERFUL ADVENTURES
AND HAIR-BREADTH ESCAPES, INCLUDING AN
ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF



THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN.

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